



PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

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ABSTRACT

Man is a social animal. We tend to function well as an organism in groups and communities. No doubt, from stone age to digital age, this instinct has permeated into all circles of life thereby determining the course of mankind through centuries. In society man moulds his interaction, behavior, gesture and action which is acceptable to other people. The same holds true in the Professional life. Entire business conglomerates such as Tata, Google, and Microsoft have clearly set of behavioral standards that the company employees are expected to honor while on or sometimes even off duty. This set of standard commonly referred a Professional Ethics. In a fiercely competitive industrial economy MNCs have not only maintain healthy quarterly statement, also have a good public rating. "Words of mouth" advertising in a powerful tool for business. This advertising is purely driven by the goodwill of the customer that in turn depends on the integrity of the company as a corporate individual. This comes from Professional ethics.

The word ethics is derived from Latin word *ethos* which means character. Thus ethics is the science of character. It gives us an insight of all our right or wrong actions and needs. The conventions and customs which our society expects us to follow. The set norms and healthy practices of the profession we are pursuing. In other word it is a moral philosophy that discusses peoples' habits, their customs or their character that set conventions for building a healthy society and ensures all round progress of people.

Our scientific knowledge enables us to learn what exists around us, but what is right way of functioning is ethics. Action of a manufacturer or construction of a particular item is definitely science, but questioning of the validity of such action and implication of its use is ethics. Hence ethics is study of behavior, implication in profession as well as in social life. Ethics is better understood in two categories:-

1. Professional ethics.

2. Social ethics.

Professional means to have specialized knowledge and training in specific field which is generally beyond the understanding of common man. It can be defined as :

"A person who applies specialized knowledge and practical skills usually obtained by education and training for the service of society is called professional person."

For example engineering is a profession that requires special knowledge which is acquired through training and experience. Similarly medical, teaching and legal practices are some other example of professions. Profession provides livelihood, but it should not orbit around earning money alone. Its contribution is to do the welfare of humanity and for that it is necessary that each profession should act under some Professional code of conduct which defines the responsibilities and privileges of an individual and the institution. A person does not become professional immediately after completing his degree, it has to be inherited in nature, the way technical skill has to be acquired. Due to advancement of science and technology all functions in society has been professionalized. Common man of today is more suspicious of these professionals, and have fears of being cheated and exploited in their hands. To build their reliability it is necessary for all members of profession to understand and recognize how deeply their conduct can affect the public interest. Therefore it is mandatory that professional people should attempt to live by the ethical standards, with service motive and do welfare of the society.

How professional ethics helps?

- (i) It removes suspicion of fear from the mind of general public that they are being cheated and exploited at the hands of professionals.
- (ii) It safeguards the interest of the society as a whole.
- (iii) It develops high moral standard in the professionals.
- (iv) It helps to gain respect and trust and confidence from general public.

Every Profession has own code of ethics which serves as guideline for the professional of that stream, and how these principles are applied in the critical situation.

Code of Professional ethics.:

- (i) The code follows approved standard and practice.
- (ii) The code gives wide publicity, to approved standard of practice.
- (iii) The code gives support to hard working person, those who help colleagues and build images in public.
- (iv) The code helps in upgrading the work performance.
- (v) The code brings flexibility in the organization by amending the outlook towards work according to need.
- (vi) The code of ethics represents total evaluation by a group of individuals having wide experience of past practices and problems, which are commonly encountered in any profession.

Now focusing on the practical real world of India one can see violation of ethics in all spheres of life. It is shameful to see that group of intellectuals who are supposed to develop the community are too focused on stuffing their pockets with money using fair or unfair means. What should have become boom for the Indian economy has become the bane of civilization. Today people understand only language of money so preaching them virtues of selfless contribution, is a difficult job. However by following conduct of business ethics transparency in business is still possible. Business ethics serves as a perfect tool to strike a balance between morality and money.

As Douglas Adam defines:

"To give real business you must add something which cannot be bought or measured with money and that is sincerity and integrity."

Our ethical values develops in childhood and it is constantly tested on the job by the decisions made by the employee parents, relatives, friends, religious writings, Educators, professional heroes, those who can influence human society. The ethical behavior of an individual not only effects his reputation within the company but also contributes how the company is perceived by others. For example we give our best to the company and work hard so Gossiping about our supervisor to fellow employees just help one to let off a little steam.....

In the corporate world there are many threats to business ethics. One of it is 'office politics'. For gaining unfair advantage over the colleagues by providing falsified information about them to the superiors is not just unprofessional activity but also unethical. This reduces employees' morals' and productivity. It is said that knowledge is power. Knowledge imparted through education guides the untrained mind to approach the world in a logical manner. Using deductive reasoning human mind tried to find solution to the regular complexities of life and society has found its path through education.

The liberalization of Indian economy has brought forth, a surge of competitive examination in all fields of education to produce technically competent individuals. However, of late a dangerous development has been observed in the current education system. In the wake to gain more mileage, educational institutions have started resorting to unfair means by "Selling" education. Almost everyday we hear paper leaking scandals that lead to cancellation of exams. Professors

teaching in elite institutions carryout private coaching classes at exorbitant fees promising 'success' in exams to students who attend it. This blatant disregard for ethics has crippled the education system making quality education a distant dream, for the middle class school and college goer's.

The essence of educational ethics has been highlighted in our sacred book Mahabharata. Ace archer Arjuna is the most favorite of all disciples of guru Dronacharya. Eklavya, an equally competent youngster was refused entry to his ashram due to his family heredity. Eklavya then built a statue of Drona and learnt art of archery. Soon he was as good as Arjuna. Perceiving this as a threat, to his fame Drona asked for his thumb as gurudakshina. This example serves as a learning for all of us. Noting can be more heartening for a teacher, the day his student gets better than him. In the vain pursuit of glory Drona strangled the fundamental aspect of teaching- impartiality.

A recent poll in the newspaper shows young students from elite institutions across the country revealed startling finding. 17% of student favored Adolf Hitler as a kind of leader, India ought to have. 23% choice is Mahatma Gandhi and 20% is Atal Bihari Vajpayee. The placement of Hitler is above Subhash Bose, Abraham Lincoln and Nelson Mandela and it is from colleges like St. Stephen, Lady Shriram, St. Xavier, Mumbai, Presidency Kolkata, Christ College, Bangalore, indicates moral vacuity of the student.

It is necessary to analyze the reason behind the above poll. Today Indian student have legendary appetite for mathematics, they feast on science, enthusiastically take commerce and economics, but all this leaves them malnourished, lacking the critical vitamins and trace elements which is necessary for healthy modern mind because no comparable survey of any liberal democracy around the world will bring up so many admirers of Hitler. Hitler, the role model of youngsters represents efficiency, discipline and nationalism which is in short supply in India.

Hitler's efficiency is measured by managerial skill by Nazi govt. to exterminate thousands of Jews in Europe, and quality of his outstanding nationalism and leadership led to complete extinction of Germany after II nd World War. Survey says it is not the younger generation of today who is to be blamed, it is the faulty educational system of our country where there is no place for values, events and facts in curriculums. The mass murder that occurred in 1984 after the death of Lt. Indira Gandhi and the return of Congress the same year as was the BJP in Gujrat shows total failure of govt. in protecting their citizens to be rewarded in this way? Attitude towards murder and rape among the middle class, and killing of a teacher by a Delhi University student because the latter was caught in cheating in an exam shows not only moral vacuum but atrophy of society's value system. A primary reason for this is, persistence of illiteracy across the country, as well collapse of the higher education system. It has created Macaulay babus who service the IT machine but is morally low. The intellectual and ethical level of society has come down though they individually prosper. The politicians, the leadership class of our country is primarily to be blamed for this state of affairs. In the name of democracy they had destroyed the education system. Simultaneously corrupted police and administration and criminalized politics which is a real threat to the nation.

Engineering professionals, compared to a man of other profession has greater liability because his work is out in the open where all can see. He can't bury his mistakes in grave like doctors neither like an architecture can cover his failures with trees and landscapes. Like politicians he can't screen his shortcomings by blaming others. He can't deny his mistakes or oversight them, because his one serious failure, can destroy career built over lifetime. For him just physical completion of project is his not task, he has to take the responsibility for the result of his efforts. Hence to uphold and advance the honor and dignity of the engineering profession an engineer should keep high standard of ethics. He should be honest and impartial, with devotion serve his employer, clients and public and use his knowledge and skill for the advancement of human welfare.

Professional ethics of doctors can bring significant change in society. Doctors should be confidential about the patients' medical history. As a medical discussion or unknowingly one may come out with a case history while maintaining the sanctity of an individual. Doctors' professional code of conduct says that they should not take favour from companies because it may lead to force them to prescribe many substandard drugs. Doctors Hippocratic oath says that his prime importance is to see benefit of patients but sometimes out of greed medical practitioners suggest operation which is an extra burden on patients. Today just to make money sex determination is flourishing. This unethical act not only violets country's law is responsible for creating imbalance in the society. From last few years medical negligence has emanated serious crisis in lives of people. Knowing or unknowingly this leads to emergency or even death. The things became worst when medical world refuses to admit their fault. Even for after care patients are handed over to less qualified and inexperienced staff which only adds misery in an individual's life.

Modern management insists to follow certain rules to safeguard the interest of employees, company, shareholder, community and protection of environment. Code of conduct for board of members and the senior management of Ashok Leyland is while discharging the responsibility the associates should not indulge themselves with competing organization without the prior approval

of the Board. This helps to reduce the corruption within the organization. Members should not derive personal benefit or undue advantages by virtue of their position or relationship with the company. Measuring such practices nepotism can be avoided.

The code of conduct for Reliance Industries encourages its employees to speak their mind and management by listening and responding their queries boost the energy level of their people. Also person co-operating in an investigation shouldn't experience retaliation for co-operation. In Reliance Industry people are accountable for their behavior at workplace.

ITC code of conduct practices good corporate citizenship by promoting gender friendly work place. It seeks to enhance equal opportunities for men and women., Prevent, stop and redress sexual harassment at the workplace and institute as a good employment practice. ITC demands, demonstrates a respectful treatment of all employees. Finally by adopting highest standards of personal ethics, integrity, confidentiality and discipline a company can ensure its success.

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